

Betrayal

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Betrayal

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All characters belong to Lucas, yadda yadda yaddaâ€¦|.

War.

The word was abhorrent to her. But she was faced with it yet again for the third time in her young life. She had fled Coruscant half mad, her mind racing with the horrors of what was to come. She made in onto the small freighter just in time, as Jar Jar took the controls and they sped away towards Maluuh, a moon on the far side of Kashyyyk. Once they were safe away, Amidala excused herself, and went to lie on the sterile bed of the medical facility. She would never forget Anakin's face as they lifted off from the docking bay, full of anger and hatred, stung by betrayal. She had no choice! He had given her none! No, she told herself, that face seared into her mind wasn't Anakin'sâ€¦|that was someone else. Tears began streaming down her face as she tried to gather the shreds of her life that were fast unraveling. Obi-Wan. She had to make it to Obi-Wan.

Bail Organa turned as the yeoman behind him called out to him by his title. "Senator Organa!" the younger man yelled, then caught up with him, out of breath. "Urgent news! Queen Amidala will be joining us shortly," he paused, "a freighter from Coruscant has just entered the system!"

Bail snatched the paper readout from the young man's hand and dismissed him, scanning it quickly. "Coruscant is under attack. It is

with the utmost urgency that I request a meeting with General Kenobi. " Queen Amidala." Organa marched hurriedly toward the General's quarters, stopping to give a lieutenant orders to prepare accommodations for the Queen's stay. He stopped in a rush before the door, and pressed the button requesting entrance. No answer. Where could he be?

General Obi-Wan Kenobi and Bail Organa stood over the display, carefully watching the position of the forces massing on Coruscant. The jedi knight's eyes looked up in anguish to his friend, and a hand raked over his close-cropped beard.

> "I never thought I would see the day," Bail Organa began. <p>

Obi-Wan swung around hard, heading to the communications post. "The Sith Lord has gone too far!" he yelled over his shoulder. Leaning over the young woman manning the station, he barked her orders, "Send an emergency signal to the Jedi Temple on Coruscant. Tell them to evacuate the planet immediately, they are about to be under attack." He swiftly returned to the monitor, as several large transport ships on the screen. Turning to Bail, he met the other man's eyes. "We must send aide to them right away."

"What is that?" Bail started, squinting down as a large blip appeared on one corner, its mass continuing to stretch until finally the full length of the vessel was revealed on the screen.

"General Kenobi!"

Both men turned to see Queen Amidala standing in the archway to the war room. Jar Jar Binks stood calmly at her side followed by the two droids R2-D2 and C3-PO. Her face was smooth, like calm waters, her commanding presence causing everyone in the room to stand at attention. Obi-Wan gave Bail a look of agreement, and left him alone to monitor the invading forces.

As the door swished shut behind them, Obi-Wan turned and crossed his arms as Amidala quickly took a chair on the other side of the small room.

"What are you doing here? How did you get the location?"

"I got it from HIM," Amidala snapped, cutting him off. "He already knows you're here. We must begin evacuating the base immediately. I've already contacted Panaka, who has scouts locating an alternative base even as we speak."

"But we weren't to transmit the location to you until the day after next," he responded, his eyes widening in realization. "That means"

"I know," Amidala answered gravely. "We have a traitor in our midst."

Anakin Skywalker went to his knees and bowed low before his master. No longer wearing the light robes of the jedi, his long body was clothed in the dark garb and black hooded cape of a sith.

"Rise, my apprentice," the other man said; his pale face obscured by his own dark cloaks. "You have been patient my friend."

Anakin joined Darth Sideous as he began walking along the dais that encircled his private chambers. He kept silent, knowing that his dark master would continue.

"Now, you must go to the Jedi Temple, and strike down those that have opposed us!" he spat with hatred. "No one must be spared. Not even your precious Queen."

Anakin stopped at his master's words, anger filling him at the memory of her escape, just hours before. "She is gone, my master," he added, clenching his fist. "Escaped to warn the Rebellion, no doubt."

"No matter," the Emperor answered, lifting his hand, "she will arrive too late to save them. Have you dispatched Tarkin to deal with the Rebels?"

"Yes, my master," came the stolid reply.

"And your mole. Is he still safely in place?" he said twitching his finger to emphasize.

"He remains undiscovered."

"Good," the evil man said smoothly. "Then go to the Jedi Temple, and wipe them from the face of the galaxy."

Mace Windu watched the troops mass beneath him from the upper balcony of the Jedi temple, their white armor gleaming in the fading sun. Nothing escaped the man's notice, his years of training catching every detail of the growing forces — their height, build and cadence all equal. "So," he told himself, "

This is the fruition of our efforts." They had all realized it too late. The Clone Wars had passed, and believing the battle won, the galaxy had celebrated the defeat of the Mandalorians. A high price had been paid, though. Naboo had been utterly destroyed. Now, only the Queen and her small force remained, as well as Jar Jar and a handful of Gungans. An entire ecosystem wiped clean from the face of the galaxy. Only afterwards, when the celebrations were done, had they understood the true meaning behind the war. The Sith Lord, who had evaded their notice time and again, now possessed the knowledge of cloning that had been secret on Naboo for centuries.

"Hmmm — work of the Sith this is," came a voice behind him. "Reveal himself now, he must."

Windu barely acknowledged the small creature standing near him. Their relationship had long since moved past such formalities. "We received an emergency transmission from Obi-Wan," the tall man replied, "he told us to evacuate the temple immediately."

Yoda sighed, and leaned his old body into his walking stick for support. "Too late it is to leave in peace. Now, fight we must when the time is ready."

And then both men stood in silence, watching the sun finally set over the gleaming spires of Coruscant.

"Jar Jar!" Obi-Wan yelled at the Gungan from across the room. Another blast shook bits of the ceiling loose, as a thin layer of dust spread out over the room.

"Yesa General?" he replied, ready at his side, his floppy ears settling on his shoulders.

"Take the Queen to the southwest hangar. I will follow you shortly. And DON'T forget the droids!" The Gungan departed the war room, and Obi-Wan scanned it one last time, as the last of the personnel shuffled out. He glanced over at the readout panel, viewing the massive battle taking place on the planet he had called home most of his life. He silently prayed that the Jedi Council had had time to escape to safety.

"The rebels are in our sights," Tarkin stated confidently in his clipped speech. "We will take the base in moments. I have engaged our tie-fighters to eliminate any stragglers that may try to escape."

"Everything is going as planned," the shifting hologram of Sideous responded. "Soon the jedi will be destroyed, and nothing will stand in our path to domination!"

Tarkin's eyes flared with his lust for power. "Yes, and soon the Senate will bow before us as well. Then we will establish a new order, free from their bureaucracy!" Tarkin glanced out the bridge of his deadly creation. The Star Destroyer was a technological wonder, a terrific masterpiece. Evident in his design was the contrast between its beauty and the deadly capacity for destruction that lie within. "Like my master's apprentice," he thought, smiling inwardly.

"There are too many of them!" cried the young padawan. Windu looked towards the young boy, barely fourteen, wielding the lightsaber frantically against the oncoming hordes of stormtroopers. For every one that was cut down, there seemed to be two in its place! Mace quickly made his way to the youth, cutting the clones down in his path, and deflecting their laser blasts deftly with his lightsaber. The boy seemed to take new strength from the jedi master's close presence, and they pressed onward toward the docking bay. Turning the sharp corner of the corridor, the boy gave out a cry of pain as laser fire tore into his shoulder. Slumping against Mace, he tried desperately to fight the agony of the wound as Windu hacked through their attacker. He quickly dispatched the two that remained, and used a force push to seal the door from where they had come. Pulling the boy along with him, he came to the tunnel that would finally lead them to the transport beyond. The door swished open quickly, but the tunnel was not empty.

Alone, Anakin Skywalker stood before them, his shoulders arched defiantly, head lowered in a feral gaze. "We meet again, Master Windu," he said calmly.

Mace glanced to Anakin's cybernetic hand, twitching impatiently at his side to unsheathe his weapon. "Your quarrel is with me. Let the boy pass," Mace said conceding.

Anakin stood upright for a moment, his eyes looking over the boy and Windu. Finally, he agreed. Nodding his head, he stepped aside, making

room for the youth to continue.

The boy looked frantically down the passageway, and back towards Mace, "Master Windu, I don't want to leave you! We can fight him together!"

"Shhhh, young padawan," he said, and kneeling before him, placed his hands softly on his shoulders. "You must live to fight another day. Go now and join the others."

Anakin's eyes narrowed, his lips pursed as he watched the exchange. Something about it reminded him— "Nevermind that," he steeled himself silently, crossing his arms impatient for battle.

Mace patted the boy reassuringly. Then the youth timidly moved down the corridor, his young eyes fearful, never leaving Anakin, who stared after him like a wild beast. The boy reached the threshold, and eased closely along the wall, sliding past the sith. He turned back one last glance at Mace Windu.

Still kneeling, Mace looked up at the boy, just slowly catching the smile that was beginning to tug at the corner of Anakin's mouth.

"Noooo!" Mace screamed after the boy, as the sith shut the door behind them. Mace rushed towards it, pounding it with fury, but it was no use — Anakin had jammed its controls. Then Mace heard the soft burst of a lightsaber being ignited from within.

"Issa not meesa fault!" Jar Jar shrugged at Obi-Wan. "The transports, theysa take off," he added, using his hand to mimic the action up into the air. The Queen and the two droids stood nearby impatiently.

> "This is impossible," Obi-Wan said, to no one in particular, "the Sith Lord's army will be here any minute!"<p>

"What about that ship?" Amidala called to them, pointing to a wrecked Corellian freighter, set towards the back of the hanger.

Obi-Wan moved swiftly past Jar Jar, grabbing Amidala by the arm, taking them and up the ramp into the ship. Through the twisting corridor, he made his way to the cockpit and sat at the pilot's controls. Jar Jar was soon at his side, and began flicking the switches that would start the take off cycle — IF it worked. Meanwhile, the two droids had followed their path down the corridor. Unfamiliar with the ship, Artoo plugged into its computer.

"Oh, why are you so nosy?" The protocol droid snapped, "those troops are going to be here any minute, and you're making small talk with a strange computer. Did you ever considered that Mistress Amidala might need our help?"

Artoo issued a series of beeps and whistles in response that only Threepio understood, his little head spinning towards his new friend.

"The Millennium Falcon? What kind of name is that?" he replied snobbishly, turning away to glance towards the bridge. "It says it's

operational, but the hyperdrive isn't working?" Threepio began to panic, trying to come up with a solution, finally slamming the smaller droid on the head when he had found it. "Oh! You're the astromech droid! Fix it! I'm going to tell her highness." The golden droid shuffled in a hurry towards the bridge, leaving his companion alone in the dark corridor.

Yoda looked over the mud hut, satisfied with its construction. Though his mastery over the Force would have allowed him to create something much more elaborate, he preferred this simplicity. Degobah was considered an inhospitable planet by most standards, and the wizened being looked around at the swampy landscape before him. This was no place to raise a child. Still, it would have to suffice until an alternative could be found. Making his way to the small hearth, he started a fire and hung a small pot above the growing blaze. He had managed to gather some edibles earlier that day, even though there were still ample space rations left. He would put aside that nourishment for the child in his care. The boy was sleeping on the far side of the tiny room, covered in thick woolen blankets. Though no more than four years of age, the boy was already astoundingly strong in the Force. It could serve him well, but great care must be taken to see that mistakes weren't repeated. The child stirred, his face marred by troubled dreams. He looked so much like that nine-year-old boy that had been brought before the council years ago. He recognized the same echo of fear in their young eyes, blissfully ignorant of the danger lurking there. Yoda bowed his head in silent anguish. Anakin Skywalker must never know of his son's existence.

Mace Windu was apprehensive. A few of the transports had managed to escape the ground invasion. How they would fare once they reached the attack above was another thing entirely. But this was not what was troubling him. What he wanted to know was "Where was Anakin Skywalker?" He searched around the quiet docking bay pensively, as Ki-Adi-Mundi herded the last of the frightened citizens on the remaining ship. Windu breathed deeply, searching outwardly with the Force for the dark presence he knew lurked somewhere nearby.

"The last of them are on board, Master Windu," Mundi spoke in a hush, "we must be going now."

Mace Windu closed his eyes, and peered through his mind into the clouded shroud that is the future. His fellow Jedi knight watched calmly as the dark eyes finally opened.

"You must go now, my friend," he said tranquilly, looking over the other's face, "it is not my destiny to leave this place."

The truth of the matter sunk to the bottom of Mundi's belly, and he nodded towards his friend and placed a compassionate hand on his shoulder. "May the Force be with you." He turned, never looking backward, and boarded the transport. Windu watched for a long moment as the craft lifted off the ground, the ramp slowly shutting behind him. He didn't have to turn back around to sense the presence that was charging him.

Igniting his lightsaber, Mace turned and faced Anakin Skywalker's as sparks flew between the two as their weapons met. Anakin was struggling with all of his fury to remove the Jedi master from his path in time to catch the departing ship.

Mace saw the transport push up and away into the atmosphere, as small explosions from the ongoing battle below reflected off its shiny hull.

Realizing that he was wasting his effort, Anakin stopped his charge, and pulled back to taunt him. "Their escape is but temporary. Once they reach the battle above, they will not survive."

Anakin hacked at Windu again, sensing that his control would not allow him to betray his emotion. The sith knew the jedi was stronger than he in the Force, but Anakin was faster and more skilled with a saber. Pulling back again, he sliced towards Windu, who blocked the blow, but Anakin had left himself open to attack. Locked in battle, Anakin pressed into the man trying to force him to the ground with sheer strength. He screamed in pain as a sharp object sliced through the air, driving itself into his shoulder blade. Anakin stumbled back, and pulled the shrapnel out, being hit suddenly by dozens of airborne objects. Windu stood amidst the tornado, calmly watching Anakin falter. Summoning his hatred, he focused on the other man, deflecting the missiles as they came hurtling towards him. As his strength grew, he managed to batter the older warrior, and sensed that for all his power, his body of flesh and bone was failing him. Then the whirlwind stopped, and Windu lit his lightsaber anew. Anakin charged at him, hewing with all he could muster, and then came his opening. Mace Windu lowered his lightsaber, and filled with evil glee, Anakin swung the beam of energy through the man's torso. In only seconds, Windu robes had fallen to a shapeless heap in the ground. Anakin sheathed his lightsaber, stunned. There was no doubt the jedi master was gone, but where? He stepped on the robes, seething with frustration. No matter. He WAS dead. He could already feel it rippling through the Force.

"Mistress Amidala!" Threepio chimed in. "Artoo says the hyperdrive is not working!" Amidala glanced over the bridge to Obi-Wan that was quickly trying to master the controls.

"Weesa can still take offa, though!" Jar Jar retorted, "But, wesa be dead in da waters up der!"

"We have to risk it," Obi-Wan cut in, then suddenly doubled over in pain as Amidala rushed to his side.

"What's wrong?" she asked, her concern overriding their present safety. When he didn't respond, she took control of the situation. "Jar Jar, start the take off cycle," she ordered, moving Kenobi out of the pilot seat. "Threepio, get Artoo working on the hyperdrive!"

"No! No, I'll be alright," Obi-Wan said reaching again for the chair.

"In your condition you're likely to get us killed," she snapped, and filled the seat herself.

"YOU'RE going to pilot the ship, your highness?" he said smugly, raising his eyebrows in disbelief.

She deftly manned the controls, bringing the ship off the ground and slowly activating the engines that would take them out of the hanger

and into deep space. "I think you'll find that I'm full of surprises, General Kenobi. A lot has changed in four years."

Obi-Wan half-smiled, then slid back into his seat, swallowing the wave of pain that had hit him earlier. Closing his eyes, he concentrated. He sensed that Master Windu was dead. Along with Ki-Adi-Mundi and a host of other jedi. Their lives snuffed out all at once — the knowledge carried to him by a ripple in the Force. He reached out now, trying to locate the others, sensing the familiarity of various people over the vastness of space. Then he felt it. Anakin. The darkness reached out to him like the tentacles of a beast. He would come for them. It was almost as if Anakin had spoken the words himself. He opened his eyes, shaking in a cold sweat, and looked out into the starfield before them. A giant vessel lay before them, a hundred times the size of their own. Amidala cried out as the sky before them was enveloped in energy, and she pulled the Falcon hard to the right to evade the monstrous beam.

"So that's why there was no ground assault," Obi-Wan said, in awe of the firepower that had just been displayed. He knew the weapon had destroyed whatever was left of the Rebel base.

"Incoming!" Amidala cried, as half-a-dozen tie-fighters filled their view. Rolling the ship, she made her way towards one of the larger cruisers, trying to shake them off their tail. The Falcon rocked as blasts pounded it over and over again. "They're too fast!" she cried. "Artoo has to get the hyperdrive working—our shields can't take much more of this!"

"Weesa have to blast em with a bombad guns!" Jar Jar cried, and got out of his seat heading out of the cockpit towards the laser cannons.

Obi-Wan joined him, heading to the opposite cannon and strapped himself in as the tracking screen popped up, and several tie-fighters appeared on the scope. Hopefully, the Gungan would be able to take a few out. It wouldn't be easy targeting the fast-moving objects without good reflexes.

Another blast rocked the hull, and Amidala set the hyperdrive coordinates in the computer, then put the ship on autopilot, heading towards the computer interface where Artoo would be. Artoo had extended his arm and was attempting to repair the messy components.

"We don't have any time, Artoo, you've got to hurry!" Threepio whined.

"How much longer does he need?" Amidala asked Threepio hurriedly.

The little droid sent another current into the hyperdrive and gave a short silent beep.

"What do you mean, 'oops'?" Threepio asked, irritated.

Amidala and Threepio were thrown to the floor as the ship lurched and then shot out into hyperspace, leaving the battle far behind.

Tarkin stood poised in front of the communication screen, his

officers busy at work behind them.

"Communication coming through from the planet Kashyyyk," one of his officers spoke.

"Put them through," Tarkin replied curtly.

The form of Senator Yarua came into view, surrounded by the ruling council of Kashyyyk. The computer translated the wookiee's howls and grunts as she spoke, but even with the computer's soothing voice, the tone was unmistakable. "You are in violation of the galactic treaty! Remove your forces from the surrounding area at once, or we will be forced to retaliate!"

Tarkin sneered slightly, staring back at the screen. "I am under orders by Emperor Palpatine to put the Council of Kashyyyk under arrest."

"Emperor Palpatine," Yarua said in shock, as the room became filled with murmuring. "What is the charge?"

"For harboring rebel forces on the far moon. Now you may surrender peacefully, or we will take the council by force," he snapped.

"We do not recognize the authority of "Emperor" Palpatine," the wookiee said with revile, "nor do we intend to surrender to you and your forces!"

"So be it," he answered, giving a motion to the communications officer to cut the transmission as the faces of the wookiee council looked on in surprise. "You may fire when ready." Tarkin looked back out towards the wooded planet looming below him as the death ray fired on the coordinates of the Kashyyyk Council at its capital. On Palpatine's command, he would send troops down to the surface amongst the confusion, using the opportunity to bend the unsuspecting population to their will. Kashyyyk will be the first of many, he told himself. They would need slaves to build their new empire, many slaves indeed.

Dantooine. This would be the location of the new base. Amidala, contacted Panaka, who would give the order for the remaining rebel forces to gather there, and then let the Falcon's autopilot take them the rest of the way. It really wasn't a bad ship at all. Its appearance had been deceiving "not only had it saved their necks with its firepower, it was making excellent time to the rebel's new base. She sighed, and slumped into the cushioned seat, tapping her fingers on the game table. There was no telling at this juncture how many had been lost in the battle. At least some of the Jedi had managed to make it off of Coruscant "they would be invaluable in the coming conflict. Master Yoda had evaded the invading forces as well. She sighed deeply, and smiled inwardly at the thought that her son had been secreted away to safety. "I wonder what kind of planet Degobah is," she thought.

"Dantooine is a good choice," came a voice around the corner. "Very remote."

"Yes," Amidala answered, sitting up when Obi-Wan appeared around the corner. "It should buy us some time to reorganize our forces."

"I fear that the jedi should not stay among you," he spoke, sliding into the seat next to her. "Anakin will be able to sense us, he will track us to the base."

Her eyes narrowed at the thought of her husband. Her earlier feelings of sadness were quickly being replaced by anger. "Then we won't give him time to find us. Perhaps we should take the battle to him."

Obi-Wan nodded in agreement. "There is also the matter of the traitor."

"Yes," she answered. Her mind drifted off again, and the room fell silent.

"It's good to see you again," he finally ventured, glancing quickly over at Amidala. "I can't believe it's really been four years."

"I know. Everything has changed so quickly. Anakin's turning, and then you didn't return to Coruscant," she broke off.

"I didn't desert you, Amidala," he said, turning to face her, "I couldn't come back. It would've destroyed me." He stood, looking away from her, and continued. "I was afraid."

"Afraid of what?" she asked rising. "That you couldn't stop Anakin from turning?"

"No," he turned back towards her bitterly, "Afraid of becoming him."

She backed away from him, not sure if she wanted to understand his meaning. Anakin was no longer the man she had once loved—he was a monster. But was Obi-Wan capable of venturing down the same path? Is that what he was trying to tell her? Everything that she had ever loved had been taken from her. Everything except her children. She would never allow them to be swallowed by this evil. "Please don't do this to me," she finally spoke.

"I was becoming bitter and jealous towards both of you," he tried to explain, "My thoughts became consumed by it—and I could feel myself slipping more and more each day. I'm so sorry," he collapsed into a seat, and choked by his emotions he hid his face in his hand. "I've failed you," he cried, "I've failed you both."

Amidala cautiously took the seat beside him, hugging him against her tightly, and then Obi-Wan began to weep openly.

"Panaka," Bail Organa greeted Amidala's former captain-of-the-guard, "it's good to see you safe." The two men clasped hands, embracing briefly as he continued. "Most of our forces are still intact, though it will take some time to get the base up and running in top form." The two men began to walk through the ancient temple, as Organa surveyed the surroundings.

"Queen Amidala will be here momentarily, and we can begin organizing our forces. We will need to act quickly, before Tarkin has the chance to regroup with the main armada. I'm sure you're aware of what we're up against?" he paused looking towards Bail.

"Yes, that ship has more firepower than our fleet combined," Bail answered, "fortunately, the rest of his armada is not as strong. But still, they have an unending supply of troops at their disposal. When I return to the Senate, I will try to rally support for our cause. At least we will not have to fight this battle alone."

"You have done more than enough for the Rebellion, Bail. Do not jeopardize yourself," Panaka cautioned.

"My position in the Senate is our only hope of maintaining an alliance. We cannot allow ourselves to be cut off from the rest of the galaxy. I will be careful, my friend."

Amidala headed down the Falcon's ramp, followed closely by Obi-Wan and the others. Already, most of the officers of the rebellion had gathered to await her arrival. A short reunion took place, broken up as Panaka approached the small party.

"I just saw Bail off. He's returning to Coruscant to seek help from the Senate," he reported.

"We must gather our troops immediately for a briefing, and we must speak privately on another matter," she said, glancing over at Obi-Wan.

"Understood," he replied, "but you must be tired, your highness, you should rest."

Panaka was cut off by the squeal of a child, as a small girl pushed through the forest of legs until she reached an opening at the center. "Mommy!" she cried out, reaching up towards Amidala.

The Queen picked up the small child and hugged her tightly. "It's alright, Leia, I'm here," she replied soothingly.

"Who's this man?" Leia asked, making a face towards Obi-Wan. Amidala looked over at her friend, who was having a difficult time masking the shock in his face. He looked down at the child, and back up quickly at Amidala. She could see that he was hurt, that she hadn't told him to expect this.

"I'm Obi-Wan Kenobi," he said, lifting the child into his arms. The child looked nervously over at her mother, and made a face like she would start to cry. "Your mother and I were friends back on Coruscant before you were born," he said sweetly. The little girl looked him over doubtfully, trying to decide whether or not she liked this man. Hefting the child in his arms, he turned back towards Amidala, and said aloud, "I think you are the prettiest child I have ever laid eyes on. Your mother's going to have some competition, no doubt." Leia's face broke out into a shy smile, as Obi-Wan set her down. Amidala gave Obi-Wan a skeptical smile, and took her daughter hand.

"I am C3-P0, human-cyborg relations," the robot blurted out to the little girl, who broke out into tears at the sight of him, and ran to clutch her mother's leg.

"I don't like him," she said tearfully, refusing to look back over at the droid.

> "Oh my! Was it something I said?" the golden droid asked as the company ignored him and pushed onward out of the docking bay. Artoo replied with a taunt, and sliding past him, followed after the others. "Oh, I wasn't asking you!" Threepio snapped, and teetered along after the astromech droid.<p>

Amidala felt much better after showering and changing into some fresh clothing. She looked over at her robotic nursemaid playing a hologame with her daughter. She would have to send her away before the conflict began, but where? If the location of the base was compromised, she did not want her child's life in jeopardy. Even the Sith Lord would have to deal with the Senate, and Bail's position would offer her some protection. Yes, Alderaan would be a very safe haven for her temporarily. She called over the robot, and told her to get Leia's things together for the trip, but not to let the child know. Leia wouldn't want to part with her mother again after just being reunited. It had been weeks since they had been together, and now she was going to send her away again. Leia would no doubt try to make things difficult as they were. The stubborn child reminded her so much of herself. Her thoughts wandered to Luke, hidden away on Degobah. "I wonder what he looks like," she asked herself. She imagined him looking much like his father for some reason, blue eyes and sandy blonde hair. When the conflict was over, they would be a family again, she promised herself.

Startled out of her thoughts by the buzzing of the door, she moved to answer it, giving the nursemaid orders to take Leia into the bedroom. The door slid open to reveal Obi-Wan, dressed in fresh clothing, and clean shaven, wearing a smile on his face.

"I thought I would come by and see how you were doing," he said charmingly.

Amidala turned away and headed back towards the mirror. She sat on the stool and began twisting her hair, securing it with small pins. "I have a son as well."

He moved across the room to her, and stood behind her watching her small hands work. "I know, Plo Koon told me. He said Master Yoda escaped with him." He paused for a moment, trying to make eye contact with her. "Why didn't you tell me?"

She stopped at this, and placed her hands down on the table. "I was going to tell you, I just didn't have time to put it to you delicately. So, I decided to wait." "I'm sorry," she added sadly, letting her hand rest on his arm, and her eyes fell to the floor.

"I am, too. For everything that's happened." He placed his hand on hers and gazed at her reflection in the mirror. "I will never forgive myself for leaving."

"You have to," she replied. She stood and withdrew her hand, gathering up her robe. "We have no time for sorrows now." She stopped short, when placed his hands on her wrists, stilling her movements.

"I don't want to forgive myself, Amidala," he said in a hushed voice. She started to say something, but instead just shook her head. "My thoughts shall dwell on you until the day I die," he spoke to her,

"your name will carry my final breath."

"I can't," she said, pleading, trying to free her wrists from him. But he would not let go.

"I love you, Amidala. I have always loved you." He gently guided her eyes to meet his, then ever so slowly, he softly pressed his lips to hers in one chaste kiss. It was his promise to her " to always love her until the end of his days.

"There's a transmission coming in your highness!"

Everyone gathered around, looking anxiously at the display. Amidala's brow knotted as she leaned over the monitor.

"Can they trace it to us?" General Kenobi asked aloud.

"No, sir," came the answer from the communications officer, "it's not sent to us directly. It's a blanket transmission." The officer paused, waiting for Amidala to respond. "It's already in progress, your highness."

> "Let's hear it then," she said coldly.<p>

The dark screen came to life, and a black hooded figure came into view. Obi-Wan Kenobi knew it was the sith lord. At his flank stood the proud Tarkin, and next to him, Anakin. Kenobi ventured a glance over to the queen, and saw the agony that she fought at the sight of her former husband.

"a new empire! A strong empire! Free from the petty bureaucracy that has plagued our galaxy for centuries! I hereby declare myself," the creature said, pulling back its hood, "Emperor of the galaxy."

They all recognized the face before them. Shock registered around the room as everyone glanced around at each other knowing that at one time or another, they had all confided in Palpatine. He knew all their secrets and now, he had betrayed them all.

The End

End
file.